

B<sup>6</sup> 24. (Amended) An article [or sheet] as claimed in claim 20 [23] in which the esterification is acetylation [comprising acetylated lignocellulose].

#### REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified patent application, as amended, is respectfully requested. Claims 10, 16, 17 and 19 have been rejected under § 112. These claims have been amended and the grounds for these rejections are believed to be obviated. All of the claims have been rejected under § 102 and/or § 103. All of the independent claims have been amended as hereafter described, and these amendments are believed to overcome the rejections of these claims based upon the prior art.

The claims have been principally rejected as unpatentable over the Teng patent 3,788,984. The Teng patent discloses the use of cellulose acetate in a method of removing oil spoils. Teng mentions lignin as an impurity in some of the starting materials which does not interfere with the acetylation of cellulose or the performance of the product. Consequently, Teng does not contemplate modification of the hydroxyl groups of the lignin.

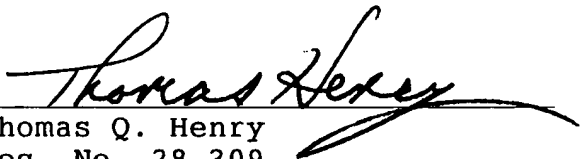
Applicants have found that modification of lignocellulose in the manner now specified in the claims results in a material which is particularly effective for absorbing water-immiscible liquid, e.g., oil. This is particularly the case if the

lignocellulose is provided by thermomechanically pulped fibers as specified in claim 8. All of the claims have been amended as to include a limitation that the absorbing material is a lignocellulosic plant material which has been modified by esterification of the hydroxyl groups in the lignin. The claims are therefore believed to patentably distinguish from the cited art.

Further consideration of the application is requested, and allowance of the claims is solicited.

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